

FERNHILL

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING - WHAT WE'VE LEARNED



SNAPSHOT

This year has been a very different year for everyone around the world, the pandemic forced changes to the way we work and how we engage within the community

Emergency Response

Many groups in Fernhill were ideally placed to support local people through the difficulties of the pandemic so it was vital for us to support access to funding so they could concentrate on designing and delivering this much needed support.

Community Cinema

A new community group was supported to come together locally and they have taken on the delivery of a community cinema, they held their first showing in February, which was very well attended, but this was put on hold until it is safe to bring people together again.



Social

[Click to play](#)

DistDancing

[Click to play](#)

Isolation & boredom busters

Social isolation and boredom was highlighted over and over again as an issue affecting people locally. Volunteers from different community groups helped tackle these issues in a variety of ways, including adult wellbeing packs, physically distant Easter activities, Halloween goodies, children's activity packs as well as many volunteers taking time to check in with their neighbours.

The volunteers were then able to build on these relationships and understand other things people were struggling with and provide signposting to support or introduce new projects locally.

A story from Kirstin

Before the lockdown I had recently formed a new group with some other local parents called The Ohana Club. Ohana means family. We had successfully launched our pilot Community Cinema project in February and had an upcoming trip to Five Sisters Zoo all planned and booked for local families at the start of April. We, like many community groups, were planning holiday programmes and trying to source and secure funding to deliver our ambitious plans.

At the start we went through a period of confusion. We had to shelf our plans and figure out how to respond in a way that would benefit the community. Emergency response isn't what the group was set up to do but given the vast number of contacts the group had managed to make in the short time since it began it became difficult to ignore the stories of people in the area struggling.

As a group we reached out to local families and attempted to understand what issues people faced and tried to identify solutions and ideas to help people.

Along the way we were able to secure funding from the Scottish Government Supporting Communities Fund to help local families. We are using the money to provide three key areas of support to local families, these are:

- Weekly mobile phone top-ups; supporting connection with their loved ones from a distance
- Weekly home energy top-ups; this allows families to keep the lights on while trying to cope with increased energy costs from being at home more during lockdown
- Weekly shop vouchers; this allows families to keep the kitchen stocked up while trying to cope with increased food costs while the whole family stays home



Kirstin's story continued ...

This vital support provided to families has been well received with one local parent saying, "I like that it's a supermarket voucher rather than a bag of food every week cause I don't want everybody to know I'm getting help."

In an ideal world. Obviously, in an ideal world we wouldn't be facing Coronavirus, but in a world where we face these issues we have identified a few key things we feel would benefit the community.



The importance of community space. We feel having some kind of accessible space within the community where activity could be coordinated from, would not only make it easier for us as a group to deliver this vital support, but it would also mean we would be able to reach more people and broaden the type of support we could deliver. We know not all families have the ability to get online so having access to a physical space would enable the creation of a drop box system that would let people communicate their needs offline and access support like their more connected peers.

What I have learned. I know from doing community work in Fernhill over the past few years that stigma around poverty is a massive issue, but I didn't think people would still feel this, because I felt like we are all in the same boat when it comes to coronavirus.

However, I've learned we actually aren't. With lockdown, we are all in our own little boats and some boats have more supplies than others. So we are all experiencing rough seas right now, it's just that some of our boats aren't really equipped to weather the storm on our own.

What I am interested in? I'm interested in bringing people together, building networks and connections and strengthening the bonds between families in my community. I just look forward to getting back to some kind of normal that will let that happen, so we can come back from this stronger and closer than ever before

Looking to the future. We are currently providing a much needed financial buffer for families that emergency and direct support isn't.

What have we learned together?

The pandemic brought with it a need for change; change to how we live our daily lives, how we engage with our neighbours and basic things like accessing food became a massive challenge. Fernhill has shown time and time again over the years that it's population is kind, caring and the sense of community spirit is high. The pandemic did not change this, in fact for many it made these feelings stronger.

The people of Fernhill have shown over the years that they have a real ability to come together in the face of adversity, supporting each other to overcome and progress forward. This was shown throughout the pandemic in the levels of people offering to help out others in need, neighbours checking in with each other and volunteers distributing food parcels, loaning digital devices to families, creating boredom busters for the kids and wellbeing packs of the adults.

While the pandemic and the restrictions placed upon people's daily lives affected everyone it was recognised that some people were more adversely affected than others; coronavirus acted a little like a magnifying glass by making existing problems and issues bigger and more difficult to manage. However, one positive in this experience was the impact that was had on stigma, people felt more confident



What have we learned together? continued...

accessing emergency support because the stigma was significantly reduced in comparison to pre-pandemic. Let's hope this continues long after the pandemic.

At the outset of the pandemic there was a period of time before formal structures of support were put in place to be able to understand what people needed from services and how these could be safely addressed.

It was in this period between the initial restrictions being announced and services receiving the funding and support they needed to provide for communities that we saw a massive grassroots response in Fernhill, with local people organising fundraisers and supporting their neighbours because it needed to happen and not because there was a system in place to do it.

What happens next?

- Groups will be continually supported, helping community through the ongoing pandemic
- The option for developing a more community-led space within Fernhill will be explored.
- The Co-ordinator will attend and support stakeholder meetings in Fernhill to deliver a community plan process locally.
- Local groups will be supported to grow, develop and become more resilient
- People, groups and partners will be engaged and supported to develop ideas and come together to lead positive change in their community



Community Co-ordinator: Cath McNally
Cath@corra.scot
07715679593

People in Place - moving forwards

People in Place continue to work alongside nine communities in Scotland, supporting local people to connect, collaborate on ideas and take action to create positive change. The local activity and learning from each community help shape plans for the place, the wider programme and policy.

Coronavirus has brought additional challenges to communities and amplified existing inequalities. Across each community the themes of participation, voice and space continue to be evident. Similar challenges were observed across the communities because of coronavirus, including food insecurity, digital access, and financial concerns.

Within each community, individuals, groups, and organisations responded quickly, coordinating support to those that required it, through local knowledge, connections, and access to resources. The pandemic has evidenced the importance and value of communities coming together, having a say in decisions and control over resources, and opened new relationships with local government. Community Co-ordinators were able to support local responses by helping to connect community members together with groups and partner organisations through the relationships established prior to the pandemic. Adaptability in approach was also key as well as providing support with accessing available funding.

Corra will continue to support communities to connect, share learning, and use their voice to influence systems and processes. This will require creative approaches that bring communities and partners together in spaces, whether physical or digital, without barriers to participation so that everyone, including those furthest from power, can contribute towards building forward better.

